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International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Graham **Maitland** (South Africa)

I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2001, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-sixth session the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 2nd and 10th to 12th meetings, on 3 October and on 22, 23 and 25 October 2001, and held a general debate on the item at its 10th and 11th meetings, on 22 and 23 October 2001 (see A/C.4/56/SR.2 and 10-12).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/56/394 and Corr.1);

(c) Letter dated 19 July 2001 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to the Secretary-General (A/56/306).

4. At its 2nd meeting, on 3 October, the Committee decided to establish an open-ended Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to be chaired by the delegation of Chile, to prepare the draft resolutions on the item.

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20).

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5. At the 10th meeting, on 22 October, the Chairman of the Fourth Committee made an introductory statement (see A/C.4/56/SR.10).

6. At the same meeting, the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space introduced the report of that Committee1 (see A/C.4/56/SR.10).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.6

7. At the 12th meeting, on 25 October, the representative of Chile, on behalf of the Working Group, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" (A/C.4/56/L.6).

8. At the same meeting, following a statement by the Chairman, the Committee decided to waive rule 120 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and to take action on draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.6 (see A/C.4/56/SR.12).

9. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.6 without a vote (see para. 10).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

10. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 51/122 of 13 December 1996, 54/68 of 6 December 1999 and 55/122 of 8 December 2000,

Deeply convinced of the common interest of mankind in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space, as the province of all mankind, for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived therefrom, and also of the importance of international cooperation in this field, for which the United Nations should continue to provide a focal point,

Reaffirming the importance of international cooperation in developing the rule of law, including the relevant norms of space law and their important role in international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and of the widest possible adherence to international treaties that promote the peaceful uses of outer space in order to meet emerging new challenges,

Seriously concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space,

Recognizing that all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, should contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Considering that space debris is an issue of concern to all nations,

Noting the progress achieved in the further development of peaceful space exploration and applications as well as in various national and cooperative space projects, which contributes to international cooperation, and the importance of further developing the legal framework to strengthen international cooperation in this field,

Convinced of the importance of the recommendations in the resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development", adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), held at Vienna from 19 to 30 July 1999,[2]

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III,[3]

Convinced that the use of space science and technology and their applications, in such areas as telemedicine, tele-education and Earth observation, contribute to achieving the objectives of the global conferences of the United Nations that address various aspects of economic, social and cultural development, inter alia, poverty eradication,

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its forty-fourth session,[4]

1. *Endorses* the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its forty-fourth session;[4]

2. *Urges* States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space[5] to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to those treaties;

3. *Notes* that, at its fortieth session, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space continued its work, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/122;[6]

4. *Notes with satisfaction* the agreement reached by the Legal Subcommittee on the question of the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit and the subsequent endorsement of that agreement by the Committee;[7]

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[2] See *Report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 19-30 July 1999* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.I.3), chap. I, resolution 1.

[3] A/56/394.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20).

[5] Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 2222 (XXI), annex); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 2345 (XXII), annex); Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (resolution 2777 (XXVI), annex); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 3235 (XXIX), annex); and Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 34/68, annex).

[6] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20), chap. II.D.

[7] A/AC.105/738, annex III, and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/55/20), para. 129.

5. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee that the Legal Subcommittee, at its forty-first session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries:

(a) Consider the following as regular agenda items:

(i) General exchange of views;

(ii) Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space;

(iii) Information on the activities of international organizations relating to space law;

(iv) Matters relating to:

a. The definition and delimitation of outer space;

b. The character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union;

(b) Consider the following single issues/items for discussion:

(i) Review and possible revision of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space;[8]

(ii) Consideration of the draft convention of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (Unidroit) on international interests in mobile equipment and the preliminary draft protocol thereto on matters specific to space property;

(c) Continue its review of the concept of the "launching State", in accordance with the work plan adopted by the Committee;[9]

6. *Notes* that the Legal Subcommittee, at its forty-first session, will submit its proposals to the Committee for new items to be considered by the Subcommittee at its forty-second session, in 2003;

7. *Agrees* that, in the context of paragraph 5 (a) (ii) above, the Legal Subcommittee should establish a working group with the terms of reference as agreed upon by the Legal Subcommittee at its fortieth session,[10] to be convened for three years, from 2002 to 2004;

8. *Notes* that the Committee would invite interested member States to designate experts to identify which aspects of the report of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the ethics of space policy might need to be studied by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and to draft a report, in consultation with other international organizations and in close liaison with the Commission, with a view to making a presentation on the matter at the forty-second session of the Legal Subcommittee, under the agenda item entitled "Information on the activities of international organizations relating to space law";

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[8] See General Assembly resolution 47/68.

[9] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* and corrigendum (A/54/20 and Corr.1), chap. II.C, para. 114.

[10] See A/AC.105/763 and Corr.1, para. 118.

9. *Notes also* that, in the context of paragraph 5 (a) (iv) above and in accordance with the agreement referred to in paragraph 4 above, the Legal Subcommittee will reconvene its working group on the item only to consider matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space;

10. *Endorses* the agreement of the Legal Subcommittee, in the context of paragraph 5 (b) (ii) above, concerning the establishment of an ad hoc consultative mechanism to review the relevant issues;[11]

11. *Notes* that, in the context of paragraph 5 (c) above, the Legal Subcommittee will reconvene its working group to consider the item;

12. *Agrees* that, in accordance with the measures relating to the working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies,[12] which were endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 11 of its resolution 52/56 of 10 December 1997, the Committee should reach consensus agreement at its forty-fifth session, in 2002, on the composition of the bureaux of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies for the third term, starting in 2003;

13. *Notes* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-eighth session, continued its work as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/122;[13]

14. *Notes with satisfaction* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-eighth session continued to consider, on a priority basis, the agenda item on space debris;

15. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-ninth session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries:

(a) Consider the following items:

(i) General exchange of views and introduction to reports submitted on national activities;

(ii) United Nations Programme on Space Applications;

(iii) Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III);

(iv) Matters relating to remote-sensing of the Earth by satellite, including applications for developing countries and monitoring of the Earth's environment;

(b) Consider the following items in accordance with the work plans adopted by the Committee;[14]

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[11] Ibid., para. 94; see also *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20), paras. 172 and 173.

[12] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/52/20), annex I.

[13] Ibid., *Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20), chap. II.C.

[14] See A/AC.105/697 and Corr.1, annex III, appendix, for the work plan for item (i); A/AC.105/736, annex II, paras. 40 and 41, for items (ii) and (iii), respectively; and A/AC.105/761, para. 130, for item (iv).

(i) Use of nuclear power sources in outer space;

(ii) Means and mechanisms for strengthening inter-agency cooperation and increasing the use of space applications and services within and among entities of the United Nations system;

(iii) Implementation of an integrated, space-based global natural disaster management system;

(iv) Space debris;

(c) Consider the following single issues/items for discussion:

(i) Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit and of its utilization and applications, including, inter alia, in the field of space communications, as well as other questions relating to developments in space communications, taking particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries;

(ii) International cooperation in limiting obtrusive space advertising that could interfere with astronomical observations;

(iii) Mobilization of financial resources to develop capacity in space science and technology applications;

16. *Notes* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session will submit its proposal to the Committee for a draft provisional agenda for the fortieth session of the Subcommittee, in 2003;

17. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee that the Committee on Space Research and the International Astronautical Federation, in liaison with Member States, be invited to arrange a symposium on the theme "Remote sensing for water management in arid and semi-arid countries", with as wide a participation as possible, to be held during the first week of the thirty-ninth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee;

18. *Notes with satisfaction* that an industry symposium, with the participation of Member States, will be organized during the thirty-ninth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, focusing on the promising area of very high resolution remote sensing and its impact on operational applications and also discussing the new space market situation;

19. *Agrees* that, in the context of paragraphs 15 (a) (ii) and (iii) and 16 above, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session should reconvene the Working Group of the Whole;

20. *Also agrees* that, in the context of paragraph 15 (b) (i) above, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session should reconvene its Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space;

21. *Invites* the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities to contribute to the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in the context of paragraph 15 (b) (ii) above by, inter alia, considering the barriers to greater use of

space applications and services within the United Nations system and suggesting means and mechanisms to eliminate those barriers;[15]

22. *Endorses* the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for 2002, as proposed to the Committee by the Expert on Space Applications;[16]

23. *Notes with satisfaction* that, in accordance with paragraph 30 of General Assembly resolution 50/27 of 6 December 1995, the African regional centres for space science and technology education, in the French language and in the English language, located in Morocco and Nigeria, respectively, and the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific continued their education programmes in 2001 and that progress has been achieved in furthering the goals of the Network of Space Science and Technology Education and Research Institutions of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and in establishing regional centres for space science and technology education in the other regions;

24. *Also notes* that Member States concerned in Asia and the Pacific continued to hold further consultations, with the assistance of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, with a view to making the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific grow into a network of nodes;

25. *Recognizes* the usefulness and significance of the Space Conferences of the Americas for the Latin American countries, notes with satisfaction that Colombia offered to host a Fourth Space Conference of the Americas in 2003, for which a Preparatory Conference will be convened during the International Air and Space Fair, known as FIDAE, to be held in Santiago in April 2002, and encourages other regions to convene periodically regional conferences with a view to achieving convergence of positions on issues of common concern in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space among States Members of the United Nations;

26. *Urges* all Governments, organs, organizations and programmes within the United Nations system as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental entities conducting space-related activities to take the necessary action for the effective implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular its resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development",[2] and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III;

27. *Notes with satisfaction* that the Committee at its forty-fourth session established action teams under the voluntary leadership of Member States to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III, which had been assigned highest priority by Member States and for which Member States had offered to lead activities, and that those action teams would report on the work conducted and submit work plans to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session for approval;[17]

28. *Notes* that, in accordance with paragraph 29 of General Assembly resolution 55/122, the resources necessary to carry out measures and activities

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[15] A/AC.105/761, para. 81.

[16] See A/AC.105/750, sects. II-IV.

[17] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20), paras. 50-62.

contained in the plan of action submitted by the Office for Outer Space Affairs to implement recommendations of UNISPACE III had been included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003[18] and that the Committee stressed the importance of the full implementation of the plan of action with the necessary resources in 2002;[19]

29. *Agrees* that, in accordance with paragraph 30 of General Assembly resolution 55/122, the Committee should include in the agendas at its forty-fifth to forty-seventh sessions an item on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III;

30. *Requests* the Committee to prepare a report under the agenda item on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III for submission to the General Assembly, in order for the Assembly to review and appraise, at its fifty-ninth session, in 2004, in accordance with paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 54/68, the implementation of the outcome of UNISPACE III and to consider further actions and initiatives, and agrees that in this context, it would be advisable to establish a working group of the Committee which would take into account the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the matter;

31. *Requests* the Committee to submit for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session recommendations on the format, scope and organizational aspects of the above-mentioned review by the Assembly;

32. *Urges* all Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications to support activities to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular the priority project proposals as recommended by the Committee at its forty-third session;[20]

33. *Recommends* that more attention be paid and political support be provided to all matters relating to the protection and the preservation of the outer space environment, especially those potentially affecting the Earth's environment;

34. *Considers* that it is essential that Member States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including those with nuclear power sources, with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, calls for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris, also considers that, to the extent possible, information thereon should be provided to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, and agrees that international cooperation is needed to expand appropriate and affordable strategies to minimize the impact of space debris on future space missions;

35. *Urges* all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes;

36. *Emphasizes* the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to an orderly growth of space activities favourable to sustained economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, including

[18] Ibid., *Supplement No. 6* (A/56/6/Rev.1), sect. 6.

[19] Ibid., *Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20), para. 64.

[20] Ibid., para. 87.

mitigation of the consequences of disasters, in particular in the developing countries;

37. *Agrees* that the benefits of space technology and its applications should be prominently brought to the attention of conferences organized within the United Nations system to address global issues relating to social, economic and cultural development and that the use of space technology should be promoted towards achieving the objectives of those conferences and implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration;[21]

38. *Notes* that the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space submitted a letter to the Secretary-General, as requested by the Committee at its forty-fourth session, bringing to his attention the need to consider the contributions of space science and technology to a greater extent in achieving the objectives of major United Nations conferences, taking particular account of the needs of developing countries;[22]

39. *Invites* all the organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, particularly those that participate in the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, to identify recommendations of major United Nations conferences that could be implemented with the use of space science and technology;

40. *Decides* that the practice of sharing seats on a rotating basis between Cuba and Peru as well as the Republic of Korea and Malaysia should be terminated, that those four countries should become full members of the Committee, and that Saudi Arabia and Slovakia should become members of the Committee;

41. *Agrees* that, after the current enlargement of the membership of the Committee, there would be no need to expand its membership further for the next seven years, except in special circumstances meriting consideration before that period has elapsed;

42. *Also agrees* that each regional group should hold consultations among its members that are also members of the Committee, for the purpose of urging them to participate in the work of the Committee and its two subcommittees, and that the regional groups would report to the Committee at its forty-fifth session on the results of their consultations;

43. *Endorses* the decision of the Committee to grant permanent observer status to the European Association for the International Space Year, the National Space Society and the Space Generation Advisory Council;

44. *Requests* the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session;

45. *Also requests* the Committee to continue to consider, at its forty-fifth session, its agenda item entitled "Spin-off benefits of space technology: review of current status";

46. *Agrees* that a new item entitled "Space and society" should be included on the agenda of the Committee at its forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions;

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[21] Resolution 55/2.

[22] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/56/20), para. 113, and A/56/306.

47. *Also agrees* that the Committee should consider a report on the activities of the International Satellite System for Search and Rescue as a part of its consideration of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications under the agenda item entitled "Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee", and invites Member States to report on their activities regarding the System;

48. *Invites* the Committee to expand the scope of international cooperation relating to the social, economic, ethical and human dimension in space science and technology applications;

49. *Requests* the specialized agencies and other international organizations to continue and, where appropriate, enhance their cooperation with the Committee and to provide it with progress reports on their work relating to the peaceful uses of outer space;

50. *Also requests* the Committee to continue its work, in accordance with the present resolution, to consider, as appropriate, new projects in outer space activities and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, including its views on which subjects should be studied in the future;

51. *Further requests* the Committee to consider and identify new mechanisms of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, in accordance with the preamble to the present resolution.